Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 02417 021106Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------021118Z 031882 /10
R 011900Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4730

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 2417

STADIS//

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC BL
SUBJ: AMERICAN PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA

1. I MET WITH PRESIDENT BANZER ON MARCH 31 FOR A DISCUSSION OF SEVERAL MATTERS OF BILATERAL INTEREST. I RAISED WITH HIM THE SITUATION OF THE AMERICAN PRISONERS. I USED THE MATERIAL FURNISHED BY THE DEPT FOR MY CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR TO DESCRIBE U.S. CONCERN ABOUT PROLONGED LEGAL PROCESSES IN THE BOLIVIAN COURTS. I SPELLED OUT THE CATEGORIES OF CASES WHICH WARRANTED PROMPT CONSIDERATION FOR SPEEDIER DECISIONS BY THE JUDGES. PRESIDENT BANZER WAS WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE SITUATION AND SAID THAT HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY CONTACT THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR ALONG THE LINES OF MY PRESENTATION TO SEE WHAT FURTHER ACTION COULD BE TAKEN TO ACCELERATE THE JUDICIAL PROCESS.

2. RUTH FERNANDEZ, BOLIVIAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL IN WASHINGTON, CALLED ON EMBASSY MARCH 31 PRIOR TO HER TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK. SHE SAID THAT PRESIDENT BANZER HAD TOLD HER THAT HE WISHES TO SOLVE THE SITUATION OF THE U.S. PRISONERS
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AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE SO AS TO REMOVE THIS MATTER FROM THE SLATE OF U.S.-BOLIVIAN BILATERAL DISUCSSIONS. HE SAID THAT THE GOB HAD ARRANGED FOR THE FINANCING OF AND NAMEING OF THREE NEW JUDGES PROMPTLY CONTINGENT UPON ARRANGING FOR THEIR SPACE TO HOLD HEARINGS. AS A CONSEQUENCE HE TOLD HER THAT HE HAS EVERY EXPECTATION THAT SEVERAL CASES WILL BE CONCLUDED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. HE SAID IT

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IS THE INTENTION OF THE GOB TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ACCELERATE THE CONSIDERATIONS OF THE CASES INVOLVING THE AMERICAN CITIZENS. HOWEVER THE PRESIDENT DISCARDS, ACCORDING TO FERNANDEZ, ANY PROPOSAL FOR A BLANKET AMNEXTY AND DEPORTATION OF ALL THE PRISONERS. HE FEELS THAT INDIVIDUALS COMMITTING OFFENSES IN BOLIVIA AGAINST BOLIVIAN LAW MUST BE PROCESSED BY THE BOLIVIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM. HE EXPRESSED REGRET AT THE SLOWNESS OF THE BOLIVIAN COURT SYSTEM WHICH IS HISTORIC, NOT NEW, AND NOT AIMED AT THE U.S. PRISONERS. HE TOLD FERNANDEZ THAT HE IS WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR TO INSURE THAT ALL APPROPRIATE EXECUTIVE BRANCH ACTION IS TAKEN.
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